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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS.

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September 6, Elijah Translated, 2 Kgs. II., 1-15.

September 13, The Shunamite's Son, 2 Kgs. IV., 18-37.

September 20, Naaman the Syrian, 2 Kgs. V., 1-16.

September 27, Review, from 1 Kgs. XII.

October 4, Elisha at Dothan, 2 Kgs. VI., 8-23.

The review lesson is sufficiently covered by the treatment of the other lessons, in this and the last number of THE STUDENT. The four advance lessons are commonly supposed to belong to the later years of the dynasty of Omri. It will throw light upon the lessons if we begin by briefly sketching the principal events of the 44 years of that dynasty, as they are recorded in the Scriptures and Josephus, and in the inscription on the Moabite Stone* and the inscriptions of Shalmanezar II. of Assyria.

* The Moabite Stone was discovered at Diban in the land of Moab, in 1868. It was afterward destroyed, but the text of it has fortunately been preserved by squeezes which had been taken. A full account of it is to be found in *The Moabite Stone*, Reeves & Turner, Strand, London, 1871. Ginsburg's translation of it is published in the *Records of the Past*, Vol. XI. Many accounts, translations, and facsimiles of it have been published; among others, by Prof. I. H. Hall, in the *Hamilton College Literary Monthly*; in the first statement of the American Palestine Exploration Society, 1871; on Osborn & Coleman's *Landscape Map of Egypt, Palestine*, etc., and in the accompanying Map Notes, 1874; in the *Hebrew Charts* of Dr. Irish, 1872. The descriptions given of the Stone differ somewhat. The following is that of Ginsburg: "It is a stone of black basalt, being about 3 feet 10 inches high, 2 feet in breadth, and 14½ inches thick,.... with an inscription on it consisting of 34 straight lines about 1¼ inches apart running across the stone." The inscription purports to be from a certain Mesha, King of Moab, who is undoubtedly to be identified with the Mesha mentioned in the Bible. It is written in the old Hebrew character, the words being separated by dots.

The inscriptions of Shalmanezar, to which reference is made in this article, are the following:

1st. The Monolith found at Kurkh, about 20 miles from Diarbekr, on the right bank of the Tigris. A copy of the original text of this is found in W. A. I., Vol. III., plates 7, 8. The translation of it fills 18 pages of the *Records of the Past*, Vol. III. Extracts are given in Smith's *Assyrian Chronology*, pp. 106-109. It brings the history of Shalmanezar down to the time when he conquered Benhadad and Ahab, and is very full.

2d. The black obelisk, which Sayce describes as follows: "This inscription is engraved on an obelisk of black marble, 5 feet in height, found by Mr. Layard in the centre of the mound at Nimroud, and now in the British Museum. Each of its four sides is divided into five compartments of sculpture representing the tribute brought to the Assyrian king by vassal princes; Jehu of Israel being among the number." A copy of the text is contained in Layard's *Inscriptions in the Cuneiform Character*. The translation fills 14 pages of the *Records of the Past*, Vol. V. Extracts are given in Smith's *Chronology*, pp. 109, 112, 113, 114. It is a sketch of the first 31 of the 35 years of Shalmanezar.

3d. Bull inscription, W. A. I., Vol. III., p. 5. 26 lines are translated in Smith's *Chronology*, p. 113.

4th. Bull inscription, Layard, pp. 15, 16. Extracts in Smith's *Chronology*, pp. 110, 112.

5th. Bull inscription, Layard, pp. 46, 47. Extracts in Smith's *Chronology*, pp. 109, 110.

Omri was a great man. He so impressed himself upon the age in which he lived, that for centuries afterward the Assyrians described the country of the Ten Tribes as the land of Omri. He came to the throne the 47th year of the disruption. This was the year 929 B. C. according to the received chronology, 936 B. C. according to a stricter computation of the biblical numerals, 885 B. C. according to the view of many eminent Assyriologists. Whichever of these dates one prefers, great care is needed to avoid confusing the dates based on these different standards.

Within the first 4 years of Omri's reign, occurred his contest with Tibni for the throne (1 Kgs. XVI., 21-23).

The marriage of Ahab with Jezebel took place, not, as many imagine, several years after Ahab became king, but in these earliest years of Omri. It was the policy of Omri to strengthen himself against his rival by an alliance with Phœnicia, and possibly also by the countenance of the great Assur-nazir-pal, then King of Assyria whose inscriptions inform us that he was in communication with the Lebanon country and the Mediterranean coast. The date of Jezebel's marriage is inferred from the fact that one of her grandsons was 22 years old at the beginning of the 44th year from the accession of Omri (2 Kgs. VIII., 25; IX., 29; 2 Chron. XXI., 17; XXII., 1).

About the 4th year of his reign, Omri reconquered Moab for Israel. This must have been the date, since he and his sons held possession of Moab 40 years (Moabite Stone, 8), and his family became extinct 40 years after his 4th year.

In his 6th year he moved his capital to Samaria (1 Kgs. XVI., 24).

In his 12th year he died, that year being also counted the 1st year of Ahab, his successor (1 Kgs. XVI., 29). Up to this time,* the house of Omri had not allowed the marriage with Jezebel to commit them to the religion of Baal. This seems to follow from the fact that Ahab's three children, Athaliah, Ahaziah, and Jehoram, are all named for Jehovah, and not for Baal.

Jehoshaphat became king of Judah at the close of the 4th year of Ahab, which was the 15th of the dynasty of Omri (1 Kgs. XXII., 41). By this time the Baalite policy had become prominent in Israel, and the two kingdoms were in danger of becoming thereby involved in hostilities (2 Chron. XVII., 1-4).

As early as the 10th year of Ahab, the 21st year of the house of Omri, these affairs were settled by the marriage of Jehoram, heir to

* It is possible that Omri may have established the religion of Baal, shortly before his death, though this by no means follows from Mic. VI., 16. In 1 Kgs. XVI., 26, Omri is evidently said to have been of Jeroboam's religion.

the throne of Judah, with Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. The date is inferred from the same facts which date the marriage of Jezebel herself. It is likely that the anti-idolatrous party in Israel approved the marriage, and expected great advantages from it.

If so, they were bitterly disappointed. The next group of events includes the attempted extermination of the anti-idolatrous party by Jezebel, the sudden withdrawal of Elijah from the court of Ahab, the $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of famine, the sacrifice and slaughter at Carmel. From the 12th to the 15th years of Ahab, or thereabouts, must have been occupied with these events. These limits of date are derived from the dates of the preceding and the following events. The slaughter at Carmel was a necessary and successful severity for the protection of Elijah and his party from their unjust persecutors.

The 16th year of Ahab was the first year of Shalmanezzer of Assyria,* who affirms that he this year rested his weapons on the sea of the setting sun (the Mediterranean), and cut timber in Mount Lebanon. The earlier part of the following year, he says (Monolith, I., 29-53; II., 1-30) that he swept the country to the north of Israel, from the Euphrates to the Orontes, piling up pyramids of the heads of his enemies in various places, touching upper Palestine, making conquests at the foot of Lebanon, receiving tribute from the kings of the sea-coast, and setting up his image on the shores of the Mediterranean. The question suggests itself whether Ahab and his Phœnician allies were among the kings of the sea-coast who then became tributary.

Later in this same 17th year of Ahab came the attack upon Samaria by Benhadad and his 32 kings. The date is fixed by the fact that there were 2 campaigns in successive years, followed by 3 years of peace with Syria, followed by the renewal of hostilities in the 22d year of Ahab (1 Kgs. XX.; XXII., 1, 2).

During all these years which follow the flight and return of Elijah, he and his fellow prophets are not only tolerated, but are influential at the court of Ahab. Jehovah is protecting them, through the wholesome fear inspired by the affair at Mount Carmel, and through the pressure of dangers from foreign enemies.

The 21st year of Ahab, the 32d of the dynasty of Omri, the 17th

* The proof of this is that Shalmanezzer claims to have defeated Benhadad and Ahab in the 6th year of his reign, and, in his 18th year, to have received tribute from Jehu (Monolith, II., 78, 91; Obelisk, 54, 59, 97, and 2d Epigraph; Bull of W. A. I., I., 24-26). His 18th year, therefore, was not earlier than the 12th of Jehoram, the son of Ahab, the year in which Jehu killed Jehoram, and became king, the year before that which is counted as the first year of Jehu. Hence Shalmanezzer's 6th year was not earlier than the year before the first of Jehoram, that is, the 21st year of Ahab. Nor was his 6th year later than this, since Ahab died early the following year, being at war with the Syrians, and not in coalition with them. The synchronism is thus defined exactly and not by mere approximation.

of Jehoshaphat,^r king of Judah, Ahab associated his son, Ahaziah, with himself on the throne (1 Kgs. XXII., 51). At the same time, apparently, an arrangement was made, which was afterwards revoked, for associating Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, with his father on the throne of Judah (2 Kgs. I., 17). This was a triumph of the party of Baal in each kingdom. The Assyrian records perhaps reveal to us the circumstances of external pressure which led to the making of these extraordinary arrangements. This very year was the 6th year of Shalmanezzer. In it he says that he defeated a formidable coalition of kings at Karkara, which is commonly identified with Aroer in the mountain country of Gilead. Benhadad was at the head of the coalition; Ahab, with the king of Hamath, was next in prominence.

The following year, Shalmanezzer was busy at the head waters of the Tigris, and Palestine was thus freed from the pressure of his arms. We are not surprised to find Ahab making war against his late ally, Benhadad, and endeavoring to engage Jehoshaphat in the same. But early in the year Ahab fell, at the battle of Ramoth Gilead. Ahaziah reigned alone for some months, but he, too, died before the close of the year, and was succeeded by his brother Jehoram. The 1st year of Jehoram was the 18th of Jehoshaphat, and was therefore the 2d of Ahaziah, the 22d of Ahab, the 33d of the dynasty of Omri, and the 7th of Shalmanezzer. It was an eventful year. Immediately after the death of Ahab, Jehoshaphat established a fresh reform in Judah, to the overthrow of the Baalite party. He maintained an alliance, however, for commercial purposes, with Ahaziah of Israel, who clung to the worship of Baal (2 Chron. XIX.; XX.). Mesha, of Moab, revolted against Ahaziah (2 Kgs. I., 1). At the head of a powerful alliance, he attempted to invade Judah (2 Chron. XX.; and probably Ps. LXXXIII.). On the death of Ahaziah, his successor re-established the worship of the calves as the State religion, while he seems to have tolerated both the worship of Baal and the anti-idolatrous worship of Jehovah.

In the 10th year of Shalmanezzer, which was the 4th of Jehoram of Israel and the 21st of Jehoshaphat, the Assyrian monarch says that he gained splendid victories over Benhadad and his ally the king of Hamath, "and the 12 kings beside the sea." He substantially repeated these exploits the following year (Obelisk, from 85; Bulls, Layard, pp. 15, 46, 47). During one of these two years, a bloody revolution occurred in Judah, which brought the Baalite party again into power. Jehoram rose in rebellion, killed all his brothers, and became co-regnant with Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. XXI., 1-15; 2 Kgs. VIII., 16-19). The 1st year of Jehoram was the 5th of Jehoram of Israel, and therefore the 22d of Jehoshaphat, and the 11th of Shalmanezzer.

Soon after this occurred the alliance of Israel, Judah and Edom against Moab (2 Kgs. III., 4-27). The date is inferred from the fact that Elijah was still living when Jehoram killed his brothers (2 Chron. XXI., 12), but had been succeeded by Elisha in the time of this alliance. From the account in Kings, it appears that Mesha was terribly defeated, whether he was subdued or not. His own account of the matter leads to the inference that he was not subdued.

Three years later Jehoshaphat died. This was the 8th year of Jehoram of Israel, the 4th of Jehoram of Judah, the 14th of Shalmanezer. This year, the king of Assyria tells us, with more than usual formality, that he crossed the Euphrates with 120,000 warriors, and once more defeated Benhadad, and his allies, the king of Hamath and others (Obelisk, 91, 92; Bull, Layard, p. 16, lines 43-46).

During this and the three following years, Edom and Libnah revolted successfully from Judah; the Philistines and Arabians made an inroad, carrying off the king's property and family; Jehoram himself became a prey to disease. Meanwhile Mesha seems to have continued in a state of active revolt. Benhadad and the Syrians were devastating Israel in continual predatory raids. In the last of these years, Shalmanezer mentions cutting timber in Lebanon. The same year, or perhaps a little earlier, Benhadad besieged Samaria (2 Kgs. VI., 24—VII.).

The following year was the 44th and last of the dynasty of Omri, and the 18th of Shalmanezer. Just at the beginning of the year, the close of the 11th and the opening of the 12th of Jehoram of Israel, occurred the death of Jehoram of Judah (2 Kgs. IX., 29; VIII., 25). He was succeeded by his son, Ahaziah. Early in the same year, Hazael murdered Benhadad of Syria, and took his place. Later in the year, the kings of Israel and Judah attacked Ramoth Gilead (2 Kgs. VIII., 28; 2 Chron. XXII., 5). Later, Jehu destroyed both kings, and extirpated the worshipers of Baal in Israel; while this same revolution in which Jezebel perished in Samaria, enabled her daughter, Athaliah, to destroy all the family of David except one baby, and seat herself as queen in Jerusalem (2 Kgs. IX.; X.; XI.; 2 Chron., XXII.). In this same year, Shalmanezer tells us, with some detail, that he conquered Hazael, besieged Damascus, and received tribute of Jehu, the son of Omri (Obelisk, 97-99, and 2d Epigraph; Bull of W. A. I., 1-26).

To complete our sketch of the history, it only needs to be added that the following year is the one which is counted the first of Jehu in Israel, and the first of Athaliah in Judah. In that year, Shalmanezer again cut cedars in Lebanon. Two years later, he once more defeated Hazael, and received the tribute of Tyre, Zidon and Gebal. Moab

seems to have been recognized as independent from the time of the extinction of the house of Omri. The names found on the Moabite Stone suggest that Moab was engaged with Hazael in the process of trimming off the territory of Israel (2 Kgs. x., 32, 33).

Our sketch shows that something like ten years intervened between the time when Elijah slew the prophets of Baal, and fled to Horeb and returned, and the time of his ascension. They were years of steady gain to the cause of which he was champion. While Ahaziah was king, there was a disposition to renew the war with the servants of Jehovah, which was promptly repressed by fire from heaven (2 Kgs., i.). Elijah lived to see the religion of Baal disestablished in Israel, and to see the true disciples of Jehovah become again safe, numerous and influential. But his life was a battle to the end. At his death, his adherents regarded him as "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof," and wondered how Israel would be defended, now that Elijah was gone.

In the absence of proof to the contrary, we may assume that the miracles of Elisha are recounted in the order of time in which they belong, as compared with other events. The tearing of the forty-two children by the two bears must, therefore, have occurred shortly after Jehoram's slaughter of his brothers and Elijah's ascension. Since human nature is human nature, we may be sure that the news of these two events produced great excitement among the enemies of the worshipers of Jehovah, and awakened anew their thirst for blood. The insulting of Elisha was probably an outbreak of this sort of feeling; and the punishment inflicted was doubtless needed, to show that, though Elijah was gone, and a Baalite prince reigned in Judah, Jehovah was yet able to protect his servants.

In the harvest season of this same first year of Jehoram of Judah, we date the raising of the Shunamite's son. Elisha's intimacy with the family had extended over at least the previous ten years, during which he had been going from one school of the prophets to another, as the assistant of Elijah. After the miracle, there were seven years of famine in the region where the Shunamite lived. If the events are related in the order in which they occurred, the woman returned, after the famine, before the revolution under Jehu (2 Kgs. VIII., 1-6). These circumstances determine the date just assigned to the miracle.

This famine was probably owing to political causes. The neighboring kings of Syria, Hamath, and the sea-coast were engaged in their desperate wars against Shalmanezzer. Moab held out against Israel, in spite of the terrible punishment inflicted by Jehoram and his allies. Within these seven years, Judah waged unsuccessful wars with

Edom, and with the Philistines and Arabians. Year after year, the soldiers of Benhadad raided the territories of Israel (2 Kgs. v., 2 ; vi., 8, 10, 14, 23). The Shunamite country was near the great valley of Esdraelon, and thus especially exposed to these evils.

We have found the King of Assyria boasting of having defeated a Palestinian coalition formed against him, in his 6th, his 10th, his 11th, and his 14th years, while the principal members of the coalition still needed to be subdued in his 18th and his 21st years. The circumstance that this coalition needed so much subduing is suspicious. We are led to wonder what account the inscriptions of Benhadad, if we had them, would give of these same battles. Probably they would tell us of the exploits of a certain Naaman, who had much to do with the organizing of the coalition, who contrived to render the victories of Shalmanezzer fruitless, if indeed they were victories, through whom, in short, "Jehovah gave salvation to Syria." The light which Assyrian history throws upon the story of Naaman is conjectural, but it is not entirely unreal.

The affair at Dothan, leaving out the miracle, is a typical affair. To call attention to only a single point, there is something very remarkable in the mingling of friendliness and ferocity which characterizes the relations between Israel and Syria, at this period. With no information except that given in the Bible, this would be difficult to explain ; but their relations to one another become very intelligible when we also understand their common relation to Shalmanezzer of Assyria.